



*Overview of Ecotourism  
and Sustainable Tourism labels & Charters  
-  
Implications for the Alplakes Ecotourism Network  
  
final document – april 2007*

*Les Clefs du Patrimoine*  
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## INTRODUCTION

### a- Definitions

Though there are as many definitions as practitioners in the field, more and more people are of the view that **ecotourism exceeds** the objectives of sustainable tourism by **focusing on natural areas** and incorporating a valid, accepted and active **contribution to conservation and education**.

*Sustainable Tourism should (WTO, 2004)<sup>1</sup>*

- 1) *Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.*
- 2) *Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.*
- 3) *Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.*

Applied over a very wide area (the Alpine arc), and de facto faced with a diversity of cultures, the notion of ecotourism has no specific boundaries. The initial work of the MITRA, in close partnership with the Rhône-Alpes and International steering groups resulted in the validation of a common definition of ecotourism.

**Ecotourism<sup>2</sup>:**

- **is nature based**
- **has an educational component**
- **a form of development that contributes to the well being of local communities and encourages their participation**
- **and contributes to the protection of heritages (cultural, natural, humain...)**

The goal of our study is to determine how this concept can be applied to the Alplakes area using a quality process. This report aims to identify the most relevant ecolabels and charters according to the Alpine Lakes Network WP6 objectives.

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<sup>1</sup> World Tourism Organization, [www.world-tourism.org](http://www.world-tourism.org)

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<sup>2</sup> Definition based on J. Tardif's work - "Ecotourisme et Développement Durable" (Ecotourism and Sustainable Development) - Revue Vertigo - [www.vertigo.uqam.ca](http://www.vertigo.uqam.ca)



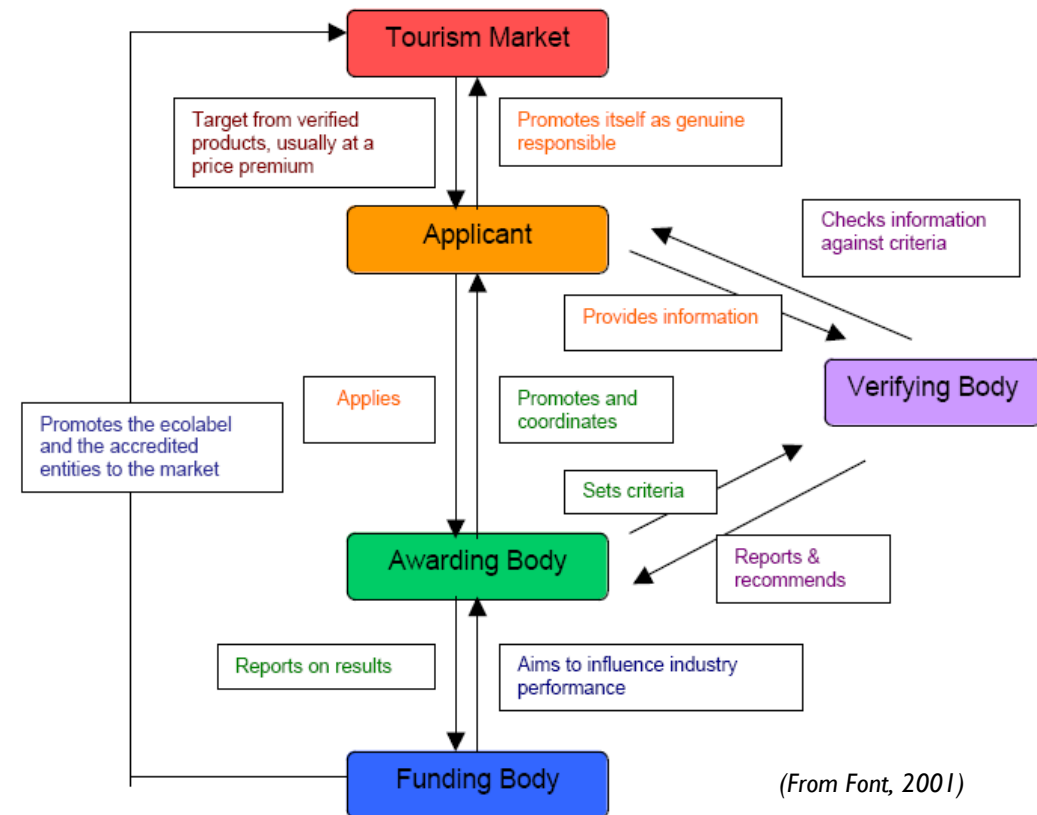
## b - Certification process

Certification is a procedure, by which a business, product or service is examined, measured and assessed against a set of standards and if successful awarded with a prize or logo (a label). This process usually follows the principles depicted in the figure below:

Certification programs within the travel and tourism industry can be divided into two methodologies:

- 1) Process-based using an internally created environment management systems (EMS) tailored to a particular business (*ISO14001 and EMAS*),
- 2) Performance-based using externally set environmental and often socio-cultural and economic criteria or benchmarks against which a business is judged (*All the others*).

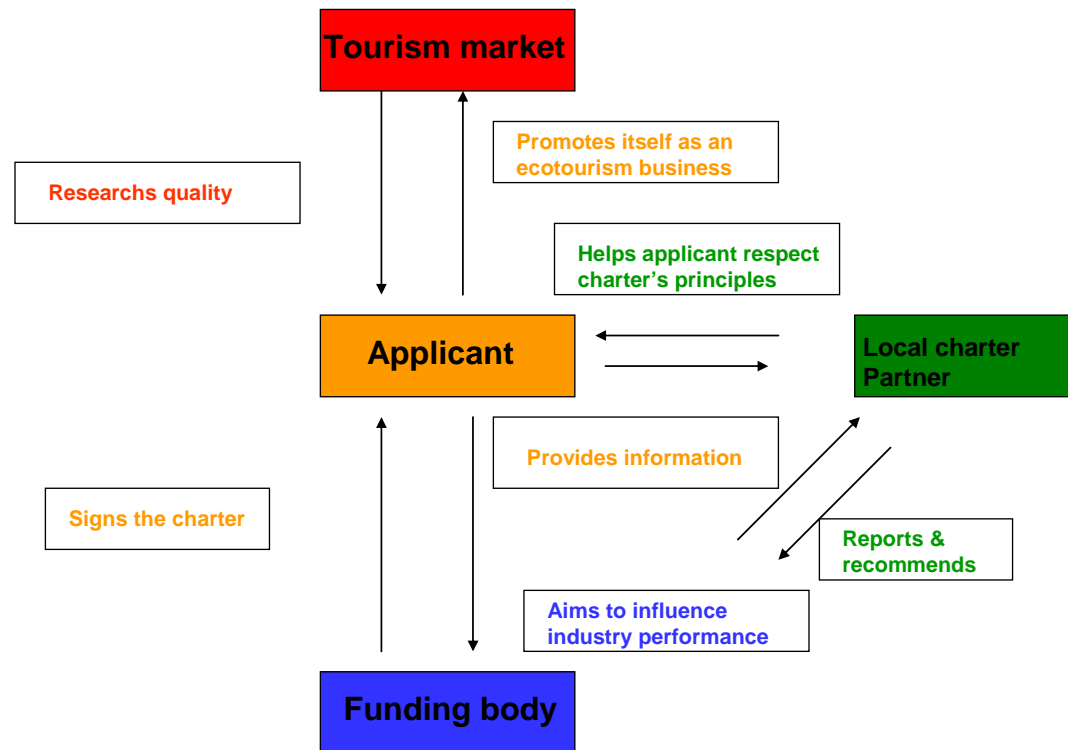
There are a number of leading global, regional national, and sub-national sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification programs (including European Ecolabel, Green Key, EMAS, Blue Flag, Green Globe 21, Green Hotel Initiative, Alianza Verde's Green Deal, PAN Parks, Smart Voyager, CST in Costa Rica, Nature's best in Sweden, NEAP in Australia etc.)





### c - Charter process (e.g.: “European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas”)

A charter process can take different forms. The most usual is that signatories do not undergo verification, as a charter is a voluntary process of continuous improvement rather than an evaluation of a business / destination sustainability practices. This is summarized in the figure below:



However, some internal verification process can occur in order to make sure that the signatory is “on the right track” and respects its engagements.



## I. OVERVIEW AND FIRST ANALYSIS OF IDENTIFIED LABELS AND CERTIFICATION PROCESSES

### 2.1. Methodology

#### a – PHASE 1: overview and selection of analysed labels

Among almost 60 existing labels all over Europe, a first selection has been made taking into consideration

- The international scope of the label,
- the reliability and potential long term development of the label

The selection of analysed labels, concerning “items certification process” was: ISO 14001 – EMAS – GREEN GLOBE – INTERNATIONAL ECOTOURISM STANDARDS - EUROPEAN ECOLABEL - GREEN KEY - NATURE’S BEST

as they were the most famous and widest sustainable tourism labels at the European level and were therefore the most relevant for our study.

For territories, we added to this selection the European Charter for protected areas which remains a reference in terms of sustainable tourism and deals with “protected” areas that can be compared to some Alpine spaces.

#### b – PHASE 2: detailed benchmark and selection of the most relevant ecolabels

We benchmarked these selected labels and charters for ecotourism and sustainable tourism in Europe, in order to have a clear vision of the advantages and drawbacks of each system

taking into account some preliminary criteria in order to short list the most relevant ecolabels :

- relationship with Ecotourism (compatibility with small ecotourism businesses, prices)
- diversity of objects considered
- compatibility with the common values of the Alplakes network
- reliability (verification process)
- marketing Program – Recognition & Future development
- technical support provided
- transferability to the Alplakes network for items
- transferability to a “destination” approach

Three labels have been short-listed from this range of criteria (see page 16)

#### c – PHASE 3: detailed compatibility to the Alplakes Network detailed grid and development objectives



A final detailed analysis evaluated:

- the proportion of Alplakes Network exploratory questions included in the evaluation process of each selected label,
- the possibility of a “balanced” partnership between the label and the Network for a development over the Alpine Lakes area.
- Conclusions and recommendations





## 2.2 Tourism Ecolabels and Certification for items


The following table summarizes the use of the main ecolabels that seemed at first most relevant to the Alpine area. They were chosen for their (relative) international scope and their (relative) recognition among the sustainable tourism field.

Ecolabel	Country	Description	Pros	Cons	Examples of certified businesses
<p><b>ISO 14001</b>  <a href="http://www.iso14001.com">www.iso14001.com</a></p> 	Worldwide	<p>ISO 14001 builds an Environmental Management System (EMS) on the basis of the business' environmental policy. The EMS is then implemented, operated and evaluated on a regular basis, ideally improving with every circuit.</p> <p><b>Cost :</b> High (&gt; 2000 €) Usually around \$20,000-40,000 for a medium size company</p> <p><b>Current size of the market:</b> Very small. Only a few hotels are certified in Europe.</p> <p><b>What can be certified?</b> Any company that can commit financially to the program...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISO standards recognized everywhere</li> <li>• Compatibility with other ISO standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not specifically designed for tourism</li> <li>• Very costly: not suitable for small operators. \$20,000-40,000 for a medium size company : Does not apply to Ecotourism but to big hotels</li> <li>• No marketing program</li> <li>• The tourism provider sets its own objectives in terms of sustainable development</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.centerparcs.com">www.centerparcs.com</a></p> <p>Some Accor and Best Western hotels...</p>
<p><b>EMAS</b>  <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/index_en.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/index_en.htm</a></p> 	Europe	<p>Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) requires the establishment and operation of an EMS as a tool for continuous environmental performance improvement.</p> <p><b>Cost :</b> High (&gt; 2000 €)</p> <p><b>Current size of the market:</b> very small. No single tourism provider in France for instance, as it is neither famous nor suitable for the tourism industry</p> <p><b>What can be certified?</b> Any company that can commit financially to the program...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasizes employee involvement and gives advantages in regards to insurance conditions and loan negotiations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very technical, and not specifically designed for tourism</li> <li>• No marketing program</li> <li>• Costly : not suitable for small operators</li> <li>• Does not apply to Ecotourism but to big hotels</li> <li>• The tourism provider sets its own objectives in terms of sustainable development</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.hotelmajestic.es">http://www.hotelmajestic.es</a></p> <p>(5 star hotel)</p>




Ecolabel	Country	Description	Pros	Cons	Examples of certified businesses
<p><b>Green Globe</b> <a href="http://www.greenglobe.org">www.greenglobe.org</a></p> 	Worldwide	<p>Initiated by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTC), its target is mass tourism.</p> <p>Green Globe is the leader in benchmarking and certification programs and services to the travel and tourism industry in Asia/ Pacific, but is almost not represented in Europe.</p> <p><b>Cost:</b> from 330 € to 1600 € for accommodation, and up to 6000 € for an airline</p> <p><b>Current size of the market:</b> very small in Europe: only 9 certified businesses.</p> <p><b>What can be certified?</b> Hotels, tour operators, leisure facilities, airlines, world heritage sites ad protected areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specifically designed for the travel industry</li> <li>Special micro business Schemes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awards the logo “affiliate” even before certification: It has hence been accused of greenwashing the industry</li> <li>Unknown in Europe</li> <li>Target is mass tourism</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.aquacityresort.com">www.aquacityresort.com</a> in Slovakia</p> <p><a href="http://www.beaches.com/">http://www.beaches.com/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.hotel-saint-victor.com/">http://www.hotel-saint-victor.com/</a></p>
<p><b>International Ecotourism Standard</b> <a href="http://www.greenglobe.org">www.greenglobe.org</a></p> 	Worldwide	<p>Green Globe and Ecotourism Australia created this label together.</p> <p><b>Cost:</b> from 300 to 2000 €, depending on the size of business.</p> <p><b>Current size of the market:</b> only 3 businesses certified worldwide</p> <p><b>What can be certified?</b> All type of ecotourism operators,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specifically designed for the ecotourism industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unknown: Only 3 certified businesses worldwide!</li> <li>No trained independent auditor in Europe at the moment.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.kuyima.com">www.kuyima.com</a></p>




Ecolabel	Country	Description	Pros	Cons	Examples of certified businesses
<p><b>EUROPEAN ECOLABEL</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.eco-label-tourism.com/">www.eco-label-tourism.com/</a></p> 	<p>Europe</p>	<p>The application pack comprises a verification form and a user-manual, designed to accompany the applicant through the process of application. Applicants must provide a detailed dossier showing how the technical criteria have been met. The verification documents are self-declarations, declarations and other relevant documents from qualified professionals. The Competent Body may make further checks on data submitted. If the application is in conformity with the requirements and the application fee is paid the applicant will be awarded the Eco-label with the right to use the logo inside his accommodation and in advertisements.</p> <p>37 mandatory criteria and 47 optional criteria.</p> <p>In France, the auditing company is AFAQ-AFNOR CERTIFICATION.</p> <p><b>Cost:</b> An application fee of 300 € per hotel, plus 850 € per day of auditing + annual fee of 0.075% of the annual sales volume. Therefore around 1500 € per year for a medium sized hotel.</p> <p><b>Current size of the market:</b> 58 hotels certified in Europe so far, and 10 campings. But more to come...</p> <p><b>What can be certified?</b> Hotels and campsites. No plans to expand to other tourism items at the moment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The brand is somewhat "famous", as used on all types of products</li> <li>• Strict criteria and verification system: certified businesses are really doing the right thing for the environment.</li> <li>• Public funding : sort of "official" recognition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quite a complex and administrative process</li> <li>• Little technical support</li> <li>• Can be considered quite costly for small businesses</li> <li>• Only 58 hotels certified so far Europe-wide. As an example, one in France only.</li> <li>• No real marketing program despite claims of being a marketing tool. This should improve shortly.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.lesorangeries.com">www.lesorangeries.com</a> in France</p> <p><a href="http://www.rifugioarlaud.it/">http://www.rifugioarlaud.it/</a> in Italy</p> <p><a href="http://www.campingdolomiti.com">www.campingdolomiti.com</a></p> <p>Hohe Tauern Holiday Resort in Austria</p> <p>Sept 2006: 13 hotels in the Green Box in Ireland .</p>




Ecolabel	Country	Description	Pros	Cons	Examples of certified businesses
<p><b>GREEN KEY</b>  <a href="http://www.green-key.org">http://www.green-key.org</a></p> 	<p>Denmark, France, Lithuania, Sweden, and Holland</p>	<p>The Green Key is an international eco-label for tourism products. It was originated for hotels in Denmark in 1994 and in 1998 France joined and started labelling camping sites. It is implemented by the European Foundation for the Environment. (EFFE)</p> <p>Each business awarded the Green Key fulfils a long list of criteria on technical issues, management, and communication.</p> <p>In each country, a national steering group with representation from authorities, NGO's and Business associations look after national Green Key activities and approve all applications from new Green Key businesses. Periodically, each awarded business receives a control visit from the national Green Key operator.</p> <p><b>Cost :</b> An application fee of 30€+1,5€ per room for application folder.</p> <p><b>Current size of the market :</b> 70 hotels in Europe, 174 campsites.</p> <p><b>What can be certified ?</b> Hotels and campsites. Only started in 2005 for hotels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cheapest by far</li> <li>• Based on continuous improvements regarding environmental impacts : one assessment per year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No on-site verification before the label is awarded, and when verification is undertaken, it is done by the EFFE staff</li> <li>• No technical support nor help to improve environmental stewardship</li> <li>• Weak marketing program because lack of funding</li> <li>• Less strict than the EU flower in terms of criteria</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.hotel-lesgoelands.com/">http://www.hotel-lesgoelands.com/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.hotel-pommeraye.com/">http://www.hotel-pommeraye.com/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.oliveraie.com/">http://www.oliveraie.com/</a></p>



<i>Ecolabel</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>	<i>Examples of certified businesses</i>
<p><b>NATURE'S BEST</b>  <a href="http://www.naturesbesta.se">http://www.naturesbesta.se</a></p> 	<p>Sweden</p>	<p>Nature´s Best is the first national quality label for nature tours in Europe, with more than 120 certified tourism operators in 2006.</p> <p>To qualify to Nature´s Best the applicant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• apply to the basic criteria.</li> <li>• have an environmental plan.</li> <li>• have a destination analysis plan.</li> <li>• apply with special criteria if your company is into fishing, hunting, riding...</li> <li>• fulfill a course in ecotourism and Nature´s Best.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cost :</b> An application fee from 400 to 1200 € depending on the annual turnover + an annual fee for using the label from 450 to 2200 € depending on the annual turnover of the company</p> <p><b>Current size of the market :</b> 176 activities are currently certified</p> <p><b>What can be certified?</b> Hotels, campsites, tour operators, activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Really focuses on ecotourism, not sustainable tourism</li> <li>• Good marketing program</li> <li>• Associations, land owners, nature conservation associations, non profit organisations, public authorities, tourist companies and institutions took part in the process of creating criteria for Nature´s Best.</li> <li>• Financially sustainable 4 years after its launching</li> <li>• 67% of surveyed businesses considered it was a good investment in terms of marketing returns</li> </ul>	<p>Specifically designed for Sweden, it would need to be adapted to the alp lakes context. Can not be used as such.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.auroraborealis.nu">www.auroraborealis.nu</a>  <a href="http://www.escapades.se">www.escapades.se</a></p>



<i>Ecolabel</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>	<i>Examples of certified businesses</i>
<p><b>European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected areas</b></p> <p><a href="http://european-charter.org/">http://european-charter.org/</a></p>  <p>EUROPARC FEDERATION EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS</p>	<p>Europe</p>	<p>In 1995 EUROPARC took the initiative to set up the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, with a project funded by the EU's LIFE programme. The charter's aim is to enable local businesses to devise individual development strategies which are coherent with the wider tourism strategy of the park.</p> <p><b>Participating businesses commit themselves to preparing a 3-year strategy</b> which includes economic, social and environmental actions, in partnership with the park. Furthermore, they agree to take part in collective actions and projects.</p> <p><b>Cost per year per business:</b> Usually businesses don't have to pay to be awarded with the charter, as the Natural Park pays for the different fees involved. Cevennes Ecotourisme have calculated an average price of 2800 € per business for the supporting entity.</p> <p><b>Current size of the market:</b> 30 parks are currently awarded with the Charter, with about 50 businesses involved each time....</p>	<p>This is a participatory process, where local businesses are deeply involved in a progress step.</p> <p>In turn, they benefit from technical support and training provided by the park, as well as from the contacts developed with other participating businesses.</p> <p>Improvements regarding sustainability are real and tangible.</p>	<p>Low marketing benefits, as there is no marketing program for the ECSTPA.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.lou-rey.com/">http://www.lou-rey.com/</a>  <a href="http://lasoleillade.net.free.fr/">http://lasoleillade.net.free.fr/</a>  <a href="http://www.la-combe.com/">http://www.la-combe.com/</a>  <a href="http://www.corniche-cevennes.com/">http://www.corniche-cevennes.com/</a></p>



## VISIT

An interesting initiative was launched in 2002 in order to address the issue of ecolabel proliferation: **the VISIT initiative** (<http://www.visit21.net/>).

Visit is not a label but serves as an **umbrella organization** for several ecolabels. VISIT stands for “Voluntary Initiative for Sustainability in Tourism”, and was created within the frame of an EU funded LIFE project in tourism eco-labelling.

Seven of these labels (based in the Netherlands, Italy, Denmark, Latvia, United Kingdom, Switzerland and Luxembourg – the Green Key described above also takes part in this initiative) founded the organisation. Together they represent over 2,000 participating tourism enterprises.

This is called **Accreditation**: The procedure by which an authoritative body verifies the competence of those doing the certifying or auditing. It “certifies the certifiers.”

However, the program is currently facing financial problems, as the European “LIFE” funding-project came to an end in 2005. As a result, there is no more marketing program in place for this VISIT initiative. The EU Ecolabel does not take part in this initiative either. Unfortunately, there are more or less competing programs within Europe. The EU commission is therefore now trying to help make these two initiatives converge.



## 2.3 Interviews with Sustainable tourism certification experts

### **Ron Mader (Editor of [www.planeta.com](http://www.planeta.com)) - Phone interview, 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2006**

*"The most important thing when drafting an ecolabel is to let people know about it: travellers, but also media, guidebook authors, in an unbiased fashion, letting them interact, point weaknesses etc... It is paramount to invite people at the table early on in order to create a frank dialog, between the public and private sector, small and big tourism operators, journalists & the inhabitants of the area. There is a need to have public meetings to talk about the label, its pros & cons."*

### **Visit – Voluntary Initiatives for Sustainable Tourism ([www.visit21.net](http://www.visit21.net)) - Phone interview with Enger Lake, 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2006**

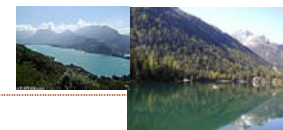
*"The added value of our organization is that ecolabels founders speak to each other and exchange information. With respect to marketing, I think that ecolabels are mainly a business to business model. Reaching end consumers costs a lot of money. We have done some research in Holland that proves that people are very far from looking at ecolabels when choosing accommodation. They look at location, budget, activities.... And if there is an ecolabel, than great, otherwise, it does not matter to them."*

### **Vlado Vancura– World Wildlife Fund – Certification program for Pan Parks ([www.panparks.org](http://www.panparks.org)) - Interview, 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2006, Pan Parks International Conference, Finland**

*"There are clearly too many labels for sustainable tourism in Europe. We have to work together to ensure that no new label comes out of the blue, and make sure that we strengthen already existing labels instead. Also, it makes sense to create a label which goal is to ensure good management of protected areas like Pan Parks, however I sincerely question the interest of creating a label focusing on Alpine lakes only. Labels are a complex and costly process, and you have to find a relevant geographical and political zone for their implementation, with local stakeholders involved in the process and embracing the concept. However drafting a common ecotourism development strategy, with local action groups, would be particularly relevant in the case of the Alpine Lakes. "*

### **Patricia Proia – AFNOR Certification – European Ecolabel ([www.eco-label-tourism.com](http://www.eco-label-tourism.com)) - Phone Interview, 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2006**

*"The EU Ecolabel is expanding. Although figures remain low, there are lots of interested prospects for next year, and we are expecting to double the number of certified businesses in the coming months. Meanwhile we will have a communication campaign starting next year. Our certified hotel in France is delighted to see that its clients are very positively responding to the ecolabel"*



## 2.4 Synthesis

Hereunder the synthesis table of the benchmarking, clearly underlying the fact that three labels seem to be most relevant to the Alplakes context and needs of the network: European Ecolabel, Nature's Best, Green Globe IES.

If we add **the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism for Protected Areas** its appears that it is the most flexible and best approach, for destinations, to get tourism businesses “on board”.

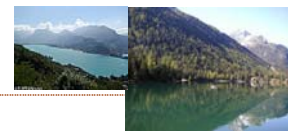
	ISO 14001	EMAS	EUROPEAN ECOLABEL	NATURE'S BEST	GREEN KEY	IES	GREEN GLOBE ITEMS .	EUROPEAN CHARTER ST
Relationship with Ecotourism	- -	- -	+	++	++	++	+	++
Diversity of objects considered	- -	- -	+	++	+	+	++	++
Compatibility with the common values	-	-	++	++	+	+	++	++
Reliability (verification process)	+	+	++	++	+	+	+	++
Marketing Program – Recognition & Future Dvp	-	- -	+	++	+	-	+	-
Technical support provided	+	+	-	++	-	-	-	++
Transferability to the Alp Lakes network for items	+	+	++	+	++	+	++	++
Transferability to the Alp Lakes network for destination	- -	- -	+	+	-	+	+	++
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	- -	- -	+	++	- +	+	+	++



## 2.5 Conclusion

As we can see from the table above, the **development of tourism ecolabels has boomed** in the last years, however, despite their potential, certification schemes have yet to acquire a significant share of the market. First, unlike environmental claims on consumer products, green claims in the service industry are difficult to standardize and monitor. Then, there is a lack of credibility of numerous tourism ecolabels, and very low consumer recognition. **It is apparent that existing sustainable tourism and ecotourism certification programs have a great deal of overlap and commonality. New programs should not have to “reinvent the wheel”.** The following table summarizes the benefits and problems of tourism ecolabels:

Benefits	Problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve as <b>management tools</b>: help tourism providers improve their environmental management and hence have real long-term impact on the environment &amp; business profitability</li> <li>• <b>Technical support</b> is often (but not always) offered and helps businesses improve their environmental impacts</li> <li>• <b>Marketing</b> of the label as a Quality brand (Nature’s Best) can have positive impacts on business, if the label gets sufficient recognition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>“Dangerous” proliferation of ecolabels</b> in the tourism industry: <b>more than 60 in Europe alone</b>, with none of them having more than 300 items certified. This generates confusion and distrust.</li> <li>• Therefore <b>very low consumer recognition</b>: despite ecolabels’ self-claims of the contrary, research proves that <b>tourists do NOT look for ecolabels</b> when booking a trip. Tourists show environmental concern in surveys, but fail to translate this attitude into action.</li> <li>• The <b>low ecotourism market share</b> induces a <b>vicious circle</b>: Consumer does not demand eco-certified tourism products, because he does not know about them, and the tourism industry does not get certified because it sees no demand.</li> <li>• Neither tourists nor potential applicants are familiar with the concept of certification schemes and how they function, and <b>technical details do not interest the audience</b>.</li> <li>• Some funding public bodies or applicants mainly see ecolabels as marketing tools and thus <b>miss the point</b>: ecolabels are tools designed to implement sustainable practices.</li> <li>• Fees are often <b>too expensive</b> for small and medium tourism businesses.</li> <li>• <b>Voluntary enrolment</b>: all certification programs in the travel and tourism industry are strictly voluntary; i.e., businesses can decide whether to apply for certification or not, mainly for marketing reasons. If governments were really serious about sustainable development, certification should be obligatory.</li> </ul>



The process of launching an eco-labelling program for the tourism industry is risky: Even projects backed up by the financial support of the EU (Visit Initiative, EU flower...) are currently suffering of a staggering lack of recognition, both from consumers and the industry itself. In this current context of “ecolabel jungle”, there are serious doubts concerning the utility of launching another ecolabel, especially because the area of interest (Alpine lakes) has many different local authorities, making it even harder to coordinate the launching of a single brand.

A better option would be to **strengthen an already existing label** (Ecolabel, Green Globe, Nature’s Best?) by facilitating its dissemination in the Alplakes area. Better yet, **the process of involving local partners in a charter process seems be the most valuable at this time**, with significant benefits regarding improved sustainability practices, as the whole process is lighter and enables tourism items and destinations to become more sustainable without having to face high implementation costs on one hand, and ensuring a full involvement of tourism entrepreneurs in the process. This would not prevent the Alplakes network to promote an ecolabel in the future, but would be the first step to start to get people on board. It seems that launching an ecolabel without a wider sustainable tourism strategy is like protecting only a few trees in the forest...

Even though **we strongly feel that involving local ecotourism businesses in a charter process would be sufficient at this time**, the next paragraph will present a more detailed analysis of the three ecolabels that are the closest to the Alplakes common values, in order to determine which one would be the most relevant in case the network decides to work with a specific label.



## 2. DETAILED BENCHMARK OF ECO LABELS FOR ITEMS

We have detailed above the first conclusions of the quick analysis of the main ecolabels and charters for the tourism industry in Europe. Three ecolabels stand out: The European Ecolabel, Green Globe International Ecotourism Standard and Nature’s Best. There is a need to determine what are the strengths and weaknesses of each of these labels to see which one could better apply to the alplakes area.

### a – Compatibility with the Alplakes common values - Synthesis

CHAPTERS	CRITERIA	EU ECOLABEL	Green Globe IES	NATURE’S BEST
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49 questions</b>	<b>15 /49</b>	<b>24 /49</b>	<b>33 / 49</b>

Out of the 49 exploratory questions of the Alplakes analysis grid, 33 are covered in Nature’s Best own analysis grid (criteria), 24 are covered in Green Globe International Ecotourism Standard, and only 15 are covered in the European Ecolabel.

- ✓ **This means that Nature’s Best is the label that is the closest to the Ecotourism common values of the Alplakes network.**
- ✓ The International Ecotourism Standard developed by Green Globe is also quite close to the Aplakes analysis grid, but appears less detailed than Nature’s Best.
- ✓ Although the European Ecolabel is very good at judging the mitigation of environmental impacts, it is far less concerned with the well being of local people or even interpretation. As such, it can not be called an “ecotourism label”: it is an environmental label for accommodation only, and is not concerned with the surroundings or the visitor experience.

Globally, this analysis shows that Nature’s Best and Green Globe International Ecotourism Standard are really focused on ecotourism (labelling all types of activities, taking care of the destination, the visitor experience, interpretation), where as the European Ecolabel is an ecolabel for accommodation only.



## Activities and facilities – synthesis table :

CHAPTERS	CRITERIA	EU ECOLABEL	Green Globe IES	NATURE'S BEST
<b>Environmental protection</b>	Taking care of the destination (5 questions)	1/5	3/5	4/5
	Destination management (4 questions)	0/4	4/4	4/4
	Minimizing impacts (5 questions)	2/5	3/5	4/5
	Saving energy (2 questions)	2/2	1/2	2/2
	Sustainable policies of suppliers (1 question)	0/1	0/1	1/1
	Water management (2 questions)	2/2	2/2	0/2
	<b>19 questions</b>	<b>7/19</b>	<b>13/19</b>	<b>15/19</b>
<b>Well being of local people</b>	Local Economy & employment (4 questions)	1/4	3/4	4/4
	Disabled access (1 question)	1/1	0/1	0/1
	<b>5 questions</b>	<b>2/5</b>	<b>3/5</b>	<b>4/5</b>
<b>Local participation</b>	Local community involvement (3 questions)	1/3	1/3	2/3
	Participation in the local tourism life (3 questions)	0/3	1/3	1/3
	<b>6 questions</b>	<b>1/6</b>	<b>2/6</b>	<b>3/6</b>



Discovery and educational approach – Synthesis table :

CHAPTERS	CRITERIA	EU ECOLABEL	Green Globe IES	NATURE'S BEST
<b>Nature-based tourism promoting the joy of discovery</b>	place / area (4 questions)	1/4	3/4	4/4
	compliance between business & local environment (3 questions)	0/3	1/3	3/3
	<b>6 questions</b>	<b>1/7</b>	<b>4/7</b>	<b>7/7</b>
<b>Environmental protection "educational approach"</b>	urbanisation and space management (1 question)	0/1	1/1	1/1
	Minimizing impacts (4 questions)	1/4	1/4	2/4
	Saving energy (1 question)	1/1	0/1	0/1
	Water management (1 question)	1/1	0/1	0/1
	<b>19 questions</b>	<b>3/7</b>	<b>2/7</b>	<b>3/7</b>
<b>Educational component</b>	educational facilities and processes on site (2 questions)	1/2	0/2	1/2
	heritages enhancement	0/2	1/2	1/2
	sustainable practices / attitudes	0/1	0/1	0/1
	<b>6 questions</b>	<b>1/5</b>	<b>1/5</b>	<b>2/5</b>



## **b – Examples of formulation of some criteria**

This chapter details a few examples of the formulation of some of the main ecotourism criteria as defined by the Alplakes network. It shows that if the European Ecolabel focused mostly on waste and energy management, Nature's Best and Green Globe detailed far more the involvement of local community and participation in the local community.

You will find below the detail for each question of the Alplakes grid and related criteria of each analysed label.



	EU ECOLABEL	Green Globe IES	NATURE'S BEST
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THE ECOTOURISM COMPANY ENCOURAGES WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING</b></p>	<p><b>Criterion 23. Waste separation by guests</b> Adequate receptacles shall be provided to allow guests to separate waste according to local or national systems. Clearly available information in the rooms shall ask the guests to separate their waste. <u>Assessment and verification:</u> The applicant shall provide a declaration of compliance with this criterion, together with details of the receptacles and a copy of the signs/information.</p> <p><b>Criterion 25. Waste separation</b> The staff shall separate waste into the categories that can be handled separately by the local or national waste management facilities. If the local administration does not offer separate waste collection and/or disposal, the accommodation shall write to them expressing their willingness to separate waste, and expressing their concern about the lack of separate collection and/or disposal. The request to local authorities to provide separate waste collection and/or disposal shall be made yearly. <u>Assessment and verification:</u> The applicant shall provide a declaration of compliance with this criterion, together with an indication of the different categories of waste accepted by the local authorities, and the procedures for collecting, separating, handling and disposing of these categories within the tourist accommodation, and/or relevant contracts with private agencies. Where appropriate the applicant shall provide every year the corresponding declaration to the local authority."</p>	<p>The ecotourism product shall implement a waste minimisation approach which includes at least the following strategies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Purchasing policies which minimise the use of packaging and disposable products and encourages use of bulk supplies;</li> <li>b. Recycling of materials including glass, plastics and paper; and</li> <li>c. Composting of organic waste.</li> </ol>	<p>3.1.7 There are waste disposal programs, and all waste is source separated and recycled, when possible.</p>



	EU ECOLABEL	Green Globe IES	NATURE'S BEST
<p><b>THE ECOTOURISM COMPANY ENCOURAGES RENEWABLE ENERGIES</b></p>	<p><b>Criterion 1. Electricity from renewable sources</b></p> <p>At least 22 % of the electricity shall come from renewable energy sources, as defined in Directive 2001/77/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 September 2001 on the promotion of electricity produced from renewable energy sources in the internal electricity market (1). This criterion only applies to tourist accommodation that has access to a market that offers energy generated from renewable energy sources.</p> <p><u>Assessment and verification:</u> The applicant shall supply a declaration from (or the contract with) the electricity supplier indicating the nature of the renewable energy source(s), the percentage of electricity supplied that is from a renewable source, and an indication of the maximum percentage that can be supplied. According to Directive 2001/77/EC, renewable energy sources shall mean renewable non-fossil energy sources (wind, solar, geothermal wave, tidal, hydro power, biomass, landfill gas, sewage treatment plant gas and biogases).</p>	<p>5.4 The ecotourism product shall minimise the use of non-renewable energy sources by implementing at least one of the following strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Use of renewable energy sources and/or purchase of energy from “ecolabel” supplier;</li> <li>b. Integration of energy efficient design and systems during construction.</li> </ul>	<p>Bonus criteria 3.3.6 The tour operator uses energy from local, renewable sources.</p>



	EU ECOLABEL	Green Globe IES	NATURE'S BEST
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THE ECOTOURISM COMPANY ENCOURAGES ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION</b></p>	<p><b>72. Environmental communication and education (1,5 points)</b></p> <p>The tourist accommodation shall provide environmental communication and education notices on local biodiversity, landscape and nature conservation measures to guests.</p> <p><u>Assessment and verification:</u> The applicant shall provide a detailed explanation of how the accommodation fulfils this criterion, together with appropriate supporting documentation.</p>	<p>The ecotourism product shall demonstrate that all staff (including customer service staff) have awareness of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The natural, cultural and heritage values of the area and its people;</li> <li>b. The environmental management issues of the area;</li> <li>c. The principles of ecotourism and how they are enacted by the product;</li> <li>d. Practices that staff are to follow as part of their duties to minimise adverse impacts on the environment; and</li> <li>e. Measures to be taken in responding to an emergency.</li> </ol> <p>An advanced ecotourism product shall provide record of formal induction training for all staff (including customer service staff) and a Training Manual which meets the above.</p>	<p>5.2.3 The tour operator and its staff strive to actively interpret knowledge about, and respect for the destination's natural and cultural values</p> <p>5.2.4 The tour operator underlines the importance of every single visitor's own responsibility to treat local people in a respectful way, and of working to avoid environmental damage.</p> <p>5.2.5 Codes of conduct are used and explained to the participants. They can include :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local conservation regulations, appropriate behaviour in sensitive habitats, wildlife encounters, finding fragile and rare plants.</li> <li>- Recommendations and local regulations regarding camping, making fires, latrines, waste disposal, cleaning.</li> </ul>



	EU ECOLABEL	Green Globe IES	NATURE'S BEST
<p><b>THE ECOTOURISM COMPANY ENCOURAGES LOCAL EMPLOYMENT AND LOCAL FOOD</b></p>	<p>No criteria for employment</p> <p><b>79. Local food products (1 point)</b></p> <p>At least two locally sourced food products shall be offered at each meal, including breakfast.</p> <p><u>Assessment and verification:</u> The applicant shall provide a declaration of compliance with this criterion, together with appropriate supporting documentation.</p>	<p><b>7.1</b> The ecotourism product shall have an approach that includes the following measures, consistent with the nature and scale of the product:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Employment of local staff;</li> <li>b. Purchase of local products;</li> <li>c. Purchase of local services;</li> <li>d. Sale of appropriate locally-made souvenirs and handicrafts; and</li> <li>e. Cash or in-kind investments are made to local community infrastructure, events and activities.</li> </ul> <p>An advanced ecotourism product shall have a written Community Benefit Statement which includes commitments to the above.</p>	<p>2.3.2 The percentage of staff and personnel costs that were paid last year to local staff and local subcontractors was higher than 50%.</p> <p>2.4.2 The percentage of locally purchased products and services was higher than 50 % of the total. Please state the approximate percentage of, respectively: food, lodging, local transportation, services, other.</p>



	EU ECOLABEL	Green Globe IES	NATURE'S BEST
<p><b>THE ECOTOURISM COMPANY IS WELL INTEGRATED IN ITS ENVIRONMENT</b></p>	<p>No criteria</p>	<p>4.2 Architectural and landscape plans shall ensure that ecotourism buildings and infrastructure are compatible with the physical and cultural landscape.</p>	<p>The tour operator and his subcontractors all know the destination very well.</p> <p>1.1.2 A travel destination analysis has been made in writing and is attached to the application. See Appendix 1.</p> <p>1.2.1 The travel destination analysis governs how the activity is to be carried out.</p> <p>1.2.2 The group size depends on the sensitivity of the area to be visited, on environmental factors, and on the safety as well as the general quality of the visitor experience.</p>



	EU ECOLABEL	Green Globe IES	NATURE'S BEST
<p><b>THE ECOTOURISM COMPANY INVOLVES LOCAL COMMUNITIES</b></p>	<p>No criteria</p>	<p><b>8.1</b> The ecotourism product shall demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Liaison with the local community has taken place including people with a cultural (traditional) affinity with an area;</li> <li>b. Local community cultural sensitivities have been taken into account;</li> <li>c. Cultural protocols are implemented;</li> <li>d. Cultural obligations are respected; and</li> <li>e. Cultural information and interpretation is accurate.</li> </ul> <p>An advanced ecotourism product shall have a written Cultural Respect and Sensitivity Statement which includes commitments to the above.</p>	<p>5.4.4 Lecturers and guides are recruited among research fellows, wildlife rangers, indigenous and/or local people.</p> <p>2.1.2 The operator contributes to, or takes part in some kind of local development work (village projects, education, mountain rescue, volunteer fire brigades, receiving trainees, the local associations, maintenance of local roads or infrastructure, committee assignments etc).</p>



### c – Pricing

EU ECOLABEL	Green Globe IES	NATURE'S BEST
<p>An application fee of 300 € per hotel, plus 850 € per day of auditing + annual fee of 0.075% of the annual sales volume.</p> <p>Around 1500 € per year for a medium-sized hotel</p>	<p>from 300 to 2000 €, depending on the size of business</p>	<p>An application fee from 400 to 1200 € depending on the annual turnover + an annual fee for using the label from 450 to 2200 € depending on the annual turnover of the company.</p>

**Conclusion:** Costs are pretty similar, but Green Globe IES is slightly cheaper than the two other ones for businesses. The higher fees for Nature's Best can be explained by the fact that Sweden's cost of life is higher than in most Western European countries. If transferred to the Alps, the label could cost much less.

### d – Transferability – Interviews with the label managers in France


EU ECOLABEL (Patricia Proia : 01 41 62 86 10)	Green Globe IES (Yohann Robert : 05 61 20 93 38)	NATURE'S BEST (Don Jonasson : +46 640 681 555.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperating with the Alplakes network would be a good thing.</li> <li>- No possibility to adapt the analysis grid for the Alplakes network, but they will study any request to certify new tourism activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperating with the Alplakes network would be a good thing.</li> <li>- Stress out the fact that Green Globe already includes all types of tourism activities and not accommodation only (Eu Ecolabel), and that the destination label already exists.</li> <li>- The Alplakes network would have the role of coordinating and motivating the different tourism actors, and Green Globe would be the certifier. A similar case exists in the Caribbean (CAST organization).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperating with the Alplakes network would be a good thing.</li> <li>- Already cooperating with NGOs in Poland, Romania, Estonia, Norway.</li> </ul>




### 3. DETAILED BENCHMARKING OF ECOLABELS FOR TERRITORIES

#### 4.1 The main ecolabels for destinations

We identified two current ecolabels certifying sustainable tourism destinations, and one charter for sustainable tourism :


<i>Ecolabel</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>	<i>Examples of certified destinations</i>
<p><b>PAN PARKS</b>  <a href="http://www.panparks.org">www.panparks.org</a></p> 	<p>Sweden, Finland, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Poland, Russia, and more to come...</p>	<p>Pan Parks is the first quality label for national parks in Europe, with 8 certified parks in 2006, and strives to represent "Europe's best wilderness areas".</p> <p>To qualify to Pan Park the applicant (national park) must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be a large protected wilderness area with a core zone of 10.000 ha</li> <li>- have a habitat management plan</li> <li>- have a visitor management plan</li> <li>- Put a sustainable tourism development strategy in place</li> <li>- Have local Pan Parks partners committed to linking their best practices to conservation goals of the national park</li> </ul> <p><b>Cost per year</b> : from 15 € to 100 € per item, depending on the country's economy</p> <p><b>Current size of the market</b> : 8 certified parks and with an average of 10 pan parks business partners per park so far</p> <p><b>What can be certified?</b> Tourism items within national parks area, and the destination itself</p>	<p>- The process helps these parks implement a sustainable tourism strategy and has good impacts on both conservation and visitor experience.</p>	<p>-The criteria objective regarding the size of the core zone prevents most European parks to join the network, preventing the brand to become rapidly recognized.</p> <p>- This is a very specific label for protected areas only and not relevant to the Alp lakes.</p> <p>- This is not easily transferable to the Alp lakes situation, as the notion of destination is clearer in the Pan Parks case: a protected area, which therefore has inherent strict conservation objectives. This is not always the case with alpine lakes management bodies.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>NOT ADAPTED</b></p>	<p>National Park in Italy :  <a href="http://www.parcomajella.it">www.parcomajella.it</a>                  See others on <a href="http://www.panparks.org">www.panparks.org</a></p>



<i>Ecolabel</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>	<i>Examples of certified destinations</i>
<p><b>GREEN GLOBE</b>  <a href="http://www.greenglobe.org">www.greenglobe.org</a></p> 	Worldwide	<p>Green Globe launched its destination certification scheme in 2004. It mainly evaluates environmental and social policy, planning systems and performance, but is clearly more “eco-focused” than socially or economically inclined.</p> <p>Indicators developed by EarthCheck and used for Green Globe certification are resource conservation, solid waste reduction, sustainability policy, energy consumption, environmental investment, air and water quality, potable water consumption, enhanced local socio-economic benefits.</p> <p>The concept of destination is an area under the administration of a single authority. (town, local regional area, council etc).</p> <p><b>Cost per year:</b> from 4200 € minimum to 13000 € per community/ destination.</p> <p><b>Current size of the market :</b> 3 destination certified, 5 benchmarked</p> <p><b>What can be certified?</b> Communities and destinations, even countries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motivates local authorities to act towards improved environmental performance.</li> <li>- Scientific approach regarding environmental impacts of a destination.</li> <li>- This concept could be used for the Alp Lakes Network.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is there really a marketing advantage in being a Green Globe destination?</li> <li>- Weakly related to tourism, as only evaluates the number of tourism businesses certified as an indicator of performance. The rest of criteria are about the environmental stewardship of the destination, which is not tourism related.</li> <li>- Does not measure tourist satisfaction regarding the destination...</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.dominica.dm">www.dominica.dm</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.balinusaduaresort.com/">http://www.balinusaduaresort.com/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.kaikoura.govt.nz/">www.kaikoura.govt.nz/</a></p> <p>Huatulco in Mexico</p>

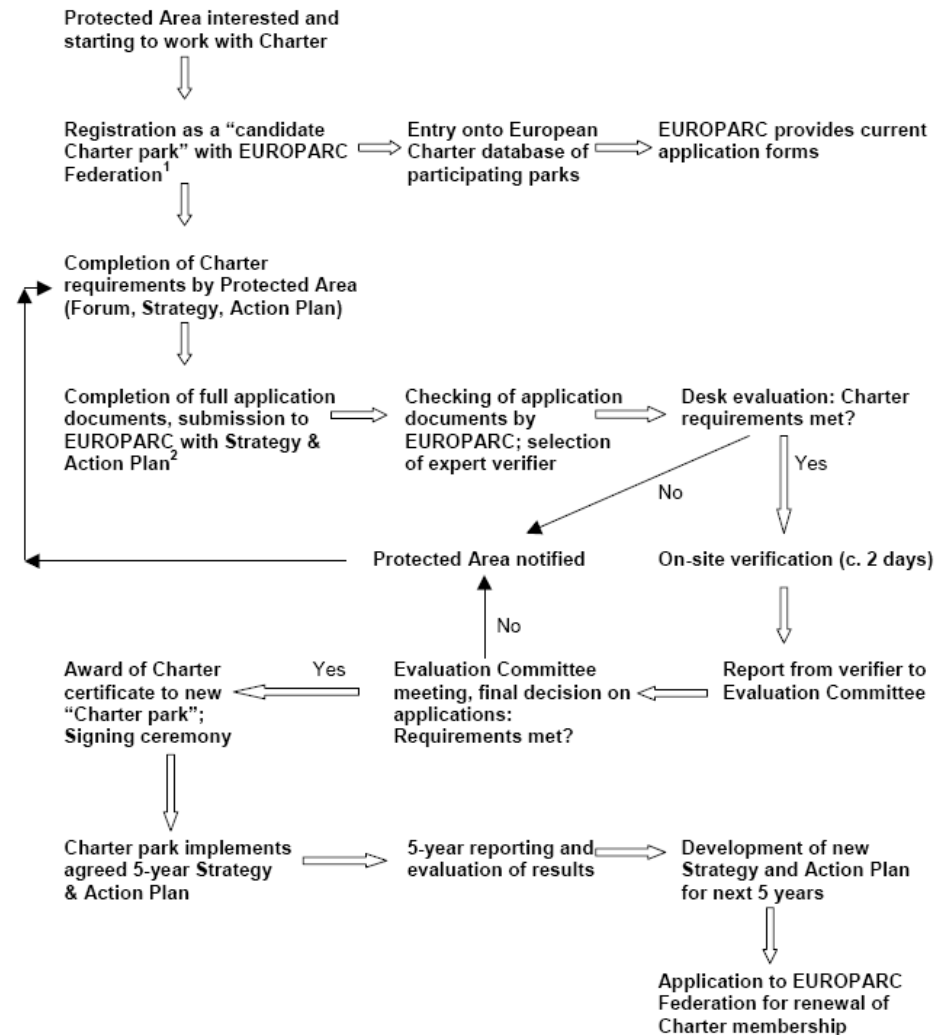
<i>Ecolabel</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>	<i>Examples of certified destinations</i>
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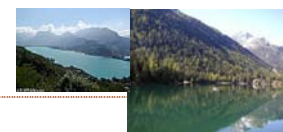


<p><b>European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected areas</b></p> <p><a href="http://european-charter.org/">http://european-charter.org/</a></p> 	<p>Europe</p>	<p>In 1995 EUROPARC took the initiative to set up the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, with a project funded by the EU's LIFE programme. The charter's aim is to enable local businesses to devise individual development strategies which are coherent with the wider tourism strategy of the park.</p> <p>Participating businesses commit themselves to preparing a 3-year strategy which includes economic, social and environmental actions, in partnership with the park. Furthermore, they agree to take part in collective actions and projects.</p> <p><b>Cost per year:</b> From 5000 € per park.</p> <p><b>Current size of the market:</b> 30 parks are currently awarded with the Charter, more to come soon.</p> <p><b>What can be awarded with the charter?</b> The Charter commits signatories to implementing a local strategy for sustainable tourism, and the shared responsibilities of the protected area authority, the tourist businesses and tour operator. It is divided into three sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sustainable tourism for the protected area</li> <li>- Sustainable tourism for tourism businesses in the area</li> <li>- Sustainable tourism for companies organising tours in or to the protected area</li> </ul>	<p>The process of implementing the Charter serves as a basis for protected areas to strengthen relationships with local tourism stakeholders and the wider tourism industry</p> <p>This is a participatory process, where local businesses are deeply involved in a progress step.</p> <p>In turn, they benefit from technical support and training provided by the park, as well as from the contacts developed with other participating businesses.</p> <p>Real measurable improvements in the area where the Charter is implemented</p> <p>This charter is probably soon going to be extended to non protected areas, and in any case can easily be transferred to any territory.</p>	<p>Low marketing benefits, as there is no marketing program for the ECSTPA.</p>	<p><a href="#">Parco Naturale Alpi Marittime (I)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Parc national et Réserve de biosphère des Cévennes (F)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Nationalpark Hohe Tauern (Salzburg/Kärnten/Tirol) (A)</a></p>
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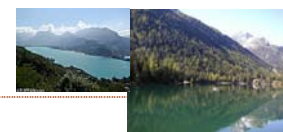
## Flowchart – Application and verification process for European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.





## 4.2 Compatibility with the Alplakes common values

CHAPTERS	CRITERIA	Green Globe DESTINATION	EUROPEAN CSTPA
<b>Ecotourism level</b>	Number of ecotourism items in destination (1 question)	1	0
	Cooperation and partnership (1 question)	0	1
	Economical context (1 question)	0	0
	Social context (1 question)	0	1
	Environmental context (1 question)	1	1
	Cultural context (1 question)	0	1
	<b>6 questions</b>	<b>2/6</b>	<b>4/6</b>
<b>Knowledge and protection of heritage</b>	Level of Nature conservation (1 question)	1	1
	Landscape charter (1 question)	0	1
	Carrying capacity (2 questions)	0	2
	Sustainable Transport (3 questions)	0	3
	<b>7 questions</b>	<b>1/7</b>	<b>7/7</b>



CHAPTERS	CRITERIA	Green Globe IES	EUROPEAN Charter ST.PA
Environmental efficiency	Recycled materials use (1 question)	1	1
	Recycling management plan (1 question)	1	1
	Waste management plan (1 question)	1	1
	Environmental campaign (1 question)	0	1
	Energy conservation plan (1 question)	1	1
	Renewable energies (2 questions)	2	2
	Water management (2 questions)	2	1
	<b>9 questions</b>	<b>8/9</b>	<b>8/9</b>
Tourism for all	Accessibility (2 questions)	0	2
	Pedagogical approach (3 questions)	0	1
	<b>5 questions</b>	<b>0/5</b>	<b>3/5</b>
Well-being of local people	Local products promotion (2 questions)	0	1
	Education (2 questions)	0	1
	Employment (2 questions)	0	1
	<b>6 questions</b>	<b>0/6</b>	<b>3/6</b>



CHAPTERS	CRITERIA	Green Globe IES	EUROPEAN Charter ST.PA
Governance improvement	Local people implication (2 questions)	0	1
	Operational process for decision-making (2 questions)	0	0
	Tourism organisation (3 questions)	0	0
	<b>6 questions</b>	<b>0/6</b>	<b>1/6</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39 questions</b>	<b>11/39</b>	<b>26/39</b>

Out of the 39 exploratory questions of the Alplakes analysis grid for destinations, 26 are covered in the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, while only 11 are covered in Green Globe Destination Standard.

- ✓ **This means that the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism is the closest to the Ecotourism common values of the Alplakes network.**
- ✓ Although the Green Globe Destination Standard is very good at judging the mitigation of environmental impacts, it is far less concerned with the well being of local people, interpretation or other tourism matters. As such, it can not be called an “ecotourism label”: it is an environmental label for destinations, and is not concerned with the visitor experience.



### 4.3 Interviews with Sustainable Tourism Charter for Destinations experts

***Hélène Liebard and Marylene Pin (Chargées de mission Association Cévennes Ecotourisme)***

***Meeting, 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2006***

*“The ECST has been of enormous help to our organization and members, as it is a great tool to implement a sustainable tourism strategy. People in our region did not want an ecolabel, they do not want to be judged on their results but more walked through the process of sustainable development. The ECST is a territorial strategy, and it involves different stakeholders with a common goal. It of course requires the establishment of a local partner organization, such as Cévennes Ecotourisme in our case, to pilot the project and offer training.”*

***Olaf Holme, Parcs Naturels Régionaux de France.***

***Phone interview, 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2006***

*“Our European Charter for Sustainable Tourism process can be applied to any territory, even if the area is not protected. You just need to develop a local strategy following these principles and have some NGO or public body follow the process and make sure tourism businesses are making progresses. We believe that this is the best possible process for implementing a sustainable tourism strategy.”*



## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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As far as an Alplakes Ecotourism approach is concerned (nature based - educational component – contribution to the well being of local communities – participation – protection of all heritages), the main aim of an Ecolabel Benchmarking is to identify, on an international scale, the ecotourism quality processes that could appear as “most relevant” regarding the Alplakes Network WP6 objective to initiate an Ecotourism Quality process in its area.

### overview of existing eco-labels

Among almost 60 existing labels all over Europe, creating confusion and a deep lack of recognition from a tourist point of view ...

- ✓ **creating its own program appears risky as well as really costly,**
- ✓ **strengthening, cooperating with an existing label appears like a better option,**
- ✓ **a charter process could be sufficient on a short term scale ?**

A first short-list had to be made taking into consideration the international scope of the label, the reliability and potential long term development of the label, as well as keeping in mind the Alplakes Ecotourism Quality Process objectives of involving territories as well as local operators and keeping a loud ambition in terms of ecotourism standards.

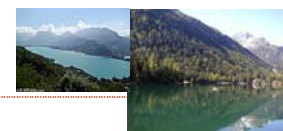
As far as territories issue is concerned, taking in account the fact that a very few labels operate for a territory certification process, we added to this selection the **European Charter for protected areas** which remains a reference in terms of sustainable tourism and deals with “protected” areas that can be compared to some Alpine spaces.

The selected programs are the following : ISO 14001 – EMAS – GREEN GLOBE – INTERNATIONAL ECOTOURISM STANDARDS - EUROPEAN ECOLABEL - GREEN KEY - NATURE'S BEST, EUROPEAN CHARTER,

Each of these quality processes will be analysed through some selected objectives relevant within the frame of the Alplakes context:



- ✓ Relationship with Ecotourism
- ✓ Diversity of objects considered
- ✓ Compatibility with the common values
- ✓ Reliability (verification process)
- ✓ Marketing Program – Recognition & Future Dvp
- ✓ Technical support provided
- ✓ Transferability to the Alp Lakes network for items
- ✓ Transferability to the Alp Lakes network for destination



## detailed benchmark and selection of the most relevant ecolabels

	pros	cons	note
ISO 14001	ISO standards recognition and compatibility with other ISO approaches	No specific approach regarding tourism. Costs and processes not accessible for small operators.	--
EMAS	Emphasizes employee involvement and gives advantages in regards to insurance conditions and loan negotiations.	Very technical, and not specifically designed for tourism No marketing program Costly : not suitable for small operators Does not apply to Ecotourism but to big hotels	--
GREEN GLOBE	Specifically designed for the travel industry Special micro business Schemes	Awards the logo “affiliate” even before certification: It has hence been accused of greenwashing the industry Unknown in Europe Target is mass tourism	+
INTERNATIONAL ECOTOURISM STANDARDS	-Specifically designed for the ecotourism industry One of the very few labels for territories	Unknown: Only 3 certified businesses worldwide! No trained independent auditor in Europe at the moment.	+
EUROPEAN ECOLABEL	The brand is “famous” even though on extra tourism businesses Strict criteria and verification system: certified businesses are really doing the right thing for the environment. Public funding : sort of “official” recognition	Complex administrative process Low technical support Can be considered quite costly for small businesses No real marketing program despite claims of being a marketing tool. This should improve shortly.	+
GREEN KEY	The cheapest by far Based on continuous improvements regarding environmental impacts : one assessment per year	Low eco results ambition (in terms of criterias as well as in terms of certificate awarding). No technical support nor help to improve environmental stewardship Weak marketing program	-
NATURE’S BEST	Really focuses on ecotourism, not sustainable tourism Good marketing program Associations, land owners, nature conservation associations, non profit organisations, public authorities, tourist companies and institutions took part in the process of creating criteria for Nature’s Best. Financially sustainable 4 years after its launching 67% of surveyed businesses considered it was a good investment in terms of marketing returns	Specifically designed for Sweden ==> transferability to an Alplakes context ?	+++
EUROPEAN CHARTER ST	This is a participatory process, where local businesses are deeply involved in a progress step. In turn, they benefit from technical support and training provided by the park, as well as from the contacts developed with other participating businesses. Improvements regarding sustainability are real and tangible.	Low marketing benefits, as there is no marketing program for the ECSTPA. No operational process on progress for items	+++



### detailed compatibility to the Alplakes Network detailed grid and development objectives

Among the selected labels, we had to check the compatibility with the Alplakes Ecotourism detailed criterias. That approach may not be understood as a “final selection” of label but a frame to have a global and instantaneous vision of the existing ecolabels within the frame of the Alplakes context.

#### ITEMS

	EU ECOLABEL	Green Globe IES	NATURE'S BEST
among 49 exploratory questions :	<b>15/49</b> 30,6%	<b>24/49</b> 49,0%	<b>33/49</b> 67,3%

- ✓ Globally, this analysis shows that Nature’s Best and Green Globe International Ecotourism Standard are really focused on ecotourism (labelling all types of activities, taking care of the destination, the visitor experience, interpretation),
- ✓ whereas the European Ecolabel seems to be, up to now, an ecolabel for accommodation only.

#### TERRITORIES

	Green Globe IES	EUROPEAN Charter
among 39 exploratory questions :	<b>11/39</b> 28,2%	<b>26/49</b> 66,7%

- ✓ This means that the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism is the closest to the Ecotourism common values of the Alplakes network.
- ✓ Although the Green Globe Destination Standard is very good at judging the mitigation of environmental impacts, it is far less concerned with the well being of local people, interpretation or other tourism matters. As such, it can not be called an “ecotourism label”: it is an environmental label for destinations, and is not concerned with the visitor experience.



## Conclusions, recommendations

- ✓ none label nor charter process appears like the precise transcription of the Alplakes Ecotourism definition,
- ✓ as far as we agree on the fact that creating its own quality process is as risky as costly, we deeply recommend to initiate, in the coming steps of the Alplakes Ecotourism program, negotiations and then cooperation with the selected labels (3 of them) and charter (2 of them) in the aim of an deeper adaptation to the Alplakes context.
- ✓ a “charter process” seems to be more federative and adaptable, and thus operational in an Alplakes context in a short term view.